

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NDJAMENA 0232

AF FOR ASST SEC FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, CD, US
SUBJECT: MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CHAD

REF: STATE 010546

SUMMARY: I WILL INFORM CHADIANS OF CONTENTS OF REFTEL AT OUR NEXT MEETING (PROBABLY JAN. 21). IN MEANTIME, I HOPE DEPARTMENT SUGGESTION OF ENCOURAGING EGYPT AND OTHER MOSLEM STATES TO INFORM TEHRAN OF THEIR SYMPATHY FOR CHAD'S REQUEST CAN BE ACTED UPON. WE HAVE REACHED A STAGE IN OUR DEALINGS WITH CHADIANS AT WHICH WE CAN MEET OUR COMMITMENT (TOHELP CHAD DEFEND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY) BY RATHER MINIMAL ACTIONS WHICH FALL WELL WITHIN OUR STATED LIMITS OF NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY AND THEREBY SUFFER THE QUESTIONING OF THE CREDITABILITY OF THE U.S. AS A FRIEND.

1. I DO NOT NEED TO REMIND YOU OF THE STRONG STAND OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH VICE PRESIDENT DJIME, OR OF THE SUBSEQUENT CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND
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PRESIDENT MALLOUM. DESPITE OUR FREQUENTLY REPEATED WARNINGS ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACED IN ACCORDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WE ARE CLEARLY COMMITTED IN CHAD'S VIEW TO BE OF ASSISTANCE. IN ADDITION, WE ARE COMMITTED IN THE EYES OF SADAT, NIMERIR, AND OTHERS TO WHOM WE MADE KNOWN OUR INTENTION TO HELP CHAD.

2. A FEW MILITARY TRAINING SLOTS WILL SIMPLY NOT MEET THIS GOAL. WE HAVE CLEARLY BEEN TALKING ABOUT MATERIEL ASSISTANCE SINCE THE BEGINNING AND IT IS SOMEWHERE IN THIS FIELD THAT WE ARE EXPECTED TO PERFORM.

3. SITUATION AT PRESENT IS RIPE FOR REASONABLY EASY SOLUTION. CHADIANS HAVE BEEN DISABUSED OF SOME OF THEIR MORE GRADUISE IDEAS, AND VICE PRESIDENT DJIME HAS REPEATEDLY TOLD ME HE THOUGHT ORIGINAL REQUEST FOR EQUIPMENT WAS EXAGGERATED. FRENCH HAVE ALSO BEEN WORKING TO DAMPEN MORE EXTREME CHADIAN ASPIRATIONS, AND HAVE NOW CONVINCED CHADIANS THAT MOST APPROPRIATE STEP WOULD BE THE ESTABLISHING OF A 1,000 MAN INTERVENTION BATTALION. FRENCH WOULD HANDLE FORMATION, TRAINING, AND ARMING OF SUCH A BATTALION, IF WE COULD FURNISH, THROUGH A THIRD COUNTRY, THE VEHICLES, COMMUNICATIONS GEAR, ETC. COMPARED TO ORIGINAL CHADIAN REQUEST, THIS WOULD BE A VERY MINIMAL ACTION AND WOULD FALL WELL WITHIN THE LIMITS OF OUR NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT CAVEAT. QUICK ACTION WOULD FULLY SATISFY OUR PRESENT COMMITMENT TO ASSIST CHAD IN THE DEFENSE OF ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. THERE WOULD BE LATER REQUESTS FOR MORE AND DIFFERENT EQUIPMENT, BUT THESE COULD BE

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FIELDLED ON THEIR MERITS.

4. IN ADDITION TO SALVAGING OUR REPUTATION, ACTION ON OUR PART WOULD STRENGTHEN THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH VARIOUS REBEL FACTIONS. OUR COMMITMENT TO ASSIST CHAD HAS REPORTEDLY PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE DECISION OF ABBA SIDDICK AND HISSEN HABRE TO CONSIDER CHANGING SIDES.

5. ONE WORD OF CAUTION, THE FURNISHING OF EQUIPMENT BY IRAN OR OTHERS MUST INCLUDE SOME SORT OF FINANCING ARRANGEMENT. TO TELL THE CHADIANS THEY CAN HAVE THE EQUIPMENT IF THEY CAN PAY FOR IT IS TO DO NOTHING. THIS GOVERNMENT IS ONE OF THE POOREST IN THE WORLD, AND TO ITS CREDIT IT RECOGNIZES THE SITUATION AND WILL NOT SIGN BILLS IT KNOWS IT CANNOT PAY.

6. COMMENT: IF IN THE LONG RUN IT TURNS OUT WE CAN DO NOTHING SIGNIFICANT TO ASSIST CHAD, WE SHOULD ADOPT THE STRAIGHTFORWARD METHOD OF INFORMING THEM THAT WE ARE SORRY BUT WE CANNOT FIND A METHOD TO HELP THEM DEFEND THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. SUCH NOTIFICATION WOULD NOT

MAKE US POOSLAR IN CHAD, BUT WOULD BE BETTER THAN THE
IMAGE OF AN UNRELIABLE OR PERHAPS EVEN A DECEITFUL
FRIEND. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT WOULD BE TO STRENGTHEN
THE MORE RADICAL PRO-SOVIET MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME MILITARY
COUNCIL AND WEAKEN VICE PRESIDENT DJIME AND OTHER PRO-WESTERN
ELEMENTS. HOWEVER, IN THE LONG RUN, OUR IMPORTANT SELF-
INTERESTS IN CHAD (THE EVENTUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINERAL
RESOURCES) WOULD SUFFER ONLY MINIMAL SETBACKS. PERHAPS THE
GREATEST DAMAGE WOULD BE TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF U.S.
RELIABILITY IN THE MINDS OF SADAT, NIMEIRI AND OTHER
AFRICAN LEADERS.BRADFORD

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